1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

LIVELIHOOD IN SILWA

An oil-press was also started twenty years ago by a stranger from Kous, and he is still referred to as Koussy. At the beginning of every summer, the shop used to press oil from the locally grown sesame (simsim). Five years later the Omda (headman of the village) started another oil-press in competition, and this for some time gave rise to gossip concerning the Omda's prestige in competing with the stranger. But during the last war, as a result of rationing the oil, the flourishing undertakings closed, being unable to come up to the hygienic requirements of the regulations and the government controls.

Besides these specialized occupations there are two other occupations undertaken by families from the village, namely weaving and hair-cutting. The two families of weavers, with their old-fashioned looms, supply all the village women with their woollen cover (worn on going outside and also used as a blanket at night). They also weave the outer garments of the older generation of men (zabut), which they wear in winter, while the younger generation is gradually abandoning the homespun and woven wool for the factory-made cloth.[1]

For the last three generations these families of weavers and barbers have been carrying on with their occupations, as they possess no land. The same applies to two families of fishermen; one of these relies entirely on fishing, while the other follows it as a supplementary occupation to farming.

Midwifery, and undertaking, are also specialized pursuits which have been carried on in the same families for a long time. The same is true of the offices of the priest and of the Sheikh of the village school (Kuttab).

From such a survey it can be seen that the specialized occupations such as carpentry, milling, pottery, and shopkeeping have been introduced by outsiders, who, though performing an important function in the village economic life, have not been entirely accepted by the villagers as fully-fledged members of the community. Immediately one of the villagers themselves engages in any of these occupations, however, this particular occupation is brought into a more conscious level of evaluation. As long as strangers alone pursue a particular task or occupation, the villagers are indifferent to, or deprecate, the value-prestige of that job. Yet if another villager can show that the job is as paying and rewarding as farming, then other villagers may entertain the idea of competing with him. The reluctance to embark on anything but farming is partly due to the fact that the specialized jobs mentioned have been started by outsiders. Moreover, there is no scope for much specialization of occupations, as an appreciable amount of this is done by the various members of the household. Barter, milling, basket- and mat-making, and even a crude type of building is being carried on by every household. It is the landless people who can only gain their living by working as craftsmen or traders. It is true that, as the technical skill required for specialized occupations is transmitted through the kinship lines, it is not surprising to find that most of these jobs

[1] Women do the spinning for the cloth from the sheep's fleece.